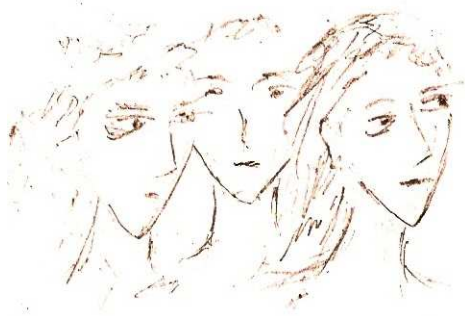
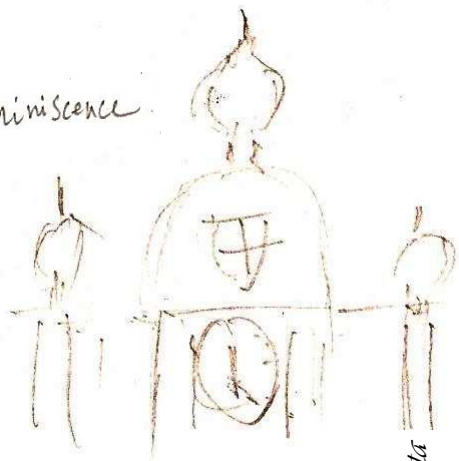




Reminiscence



Edited by

Uttam Dal & Subham Dasgupta

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Smṛti

The reminiscence

Edited by

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NOT FOR SALE

Cover Design
[Uttam Pal](#)

CONTENTS

Foreword	vii
Editorial	ix
01. দশ ঘণ্টার ইতিবৃত্ত <i>Agnivo Niyogi</i>	xi
02. The People Who Kept My Name Tommy <i>Chandan Champa Baha Hembrem</i>	xiv
03. Speaking Out to The Stars... <i>Debaleena Basu</i>	xvi
04. Magical Numbers.Com <i>Krishnendu Sarkar</i>	xviii
05. রবি-প্রণাম <i>Madhurima Dhara</i>	xx
06. Sirjee <i>Neelanjan Chatterjee</i>	xxi
07. Solitary Reaper <i>Priyanka Kejriwal</i>	xxix
08. Vairav-Vaishnavi Katha <i>Rituparna Mandal</i>	xxx
09. Blank Page <i>Sakshi Arora</i>	xli

10. Then and Now	
<i>Sayan Mullick Chowdhury</i>	xlii
11. They Don't Come with Titles	
<i>Subham Dasgupta</i>	xlv
12. An Untitled Poem	
<i>Subhasree Ray</i>	liii
13. An Edited Photo	
<i>Sugata Roy</i>	liv
14. Queer-Date	
<i>Sumitash Jana</i>	lv
15. বিদায় বেলায়	
<i>Uttam Pal</i>	lxi
Acknowledgements	lxii

FOREWORD

‘মোহনা’—দেখেছিল সে একটি ছোট গাঁয়ে
দুই নদীর উপত্যকায় হিমালয়ের পায়ে।
তার কিশোর মনে ছুয়েছিল নবীনতার আলো
সে যে এমনই কিছু করতে চেয়েছিল।
তাই, ফিরে এসে নিজ শহরেও চালিয়েছিল চেষ্টা
জোগার হল লেখা, নাম দিল—‘বিকল্প’।
কিন্তু, আখিরে বাচলনা তার শেষটা
তার যে বয়স ছিল কম, হাতে টাকাও ছিল সল্প।

অলস সময় অগোচরে গেছে বয়ে
যৌবনে পা রেখেছে সে কৈশর পেড়িয়ে।
অবশেষে মিটল আজ অপেক্ষা তার দীর্ঘ
‘স্মৃতি’—তারই সাহিত্য সেবায় একটি দীন অর্ঘ্য।
সাহিত্যের এই মহা যজ্ঞে অবিরাম অশেষ
যদিওবা মিলিয়ে যাবে, রবেনা এর রেশ।

Uttam Pal

Kolkata, India

17 July 2008

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EDITORIAL

From Subham's Desk

They say that the "pen is mightier than sword". (Though we badly need to dispose off the swords in today's world of constant warfare)

But strangely, though the three years of Presi life have brought out the multifaceted talents in many of our classmates (our talented batch boasts of a budding violinist, budding dancers, singers, movie-editors, reciters, and even a handicraftsman), seldom have we seen the might of the pen... the literary talents have always been shifted out of the limelight by the more extrovert ones... and hence, the *Prachirika* continued to be a mere notice board (except, may be the PSI days, but that was more out of compulsion than out of heart). And now, as the *Chotto Songsar* goes nuclear, *Smriti* makes an attempt to bring the Chetan Bhagats and Joy Goswamis out of everyone, as one of the last endeavours of our crazy batch. Cheers to my classmates, for their active and enthusiastic participation (though some were too busy to contribute), and for enriching the magazine with literatures of various genres. Who knows, some day in near future, their Pen may actually become the Sword, a

sword that will counter the Big, Bad world, and will make the world peaceful, humane.

From Uttam's Desk

ভেবেছিলাম থাকবে সবে—ভাবতে ঞ্জতি কী?
ইচ্ছে থাকে অনেক কিছুই—সব মেটে কী!
সবার মনে হানা দেবার নেই তো অধিকার
কেন সে যে বিরূপ হল জানিনা কিছু তার।
তোমরা যে যা দিয়েছিলে আমার কথা স্মরি
তাই ভরে ভাসিয়ে দিলাম আমার ছোট তরী।

Kolkata, India
14 August 2008

দশ ঘন্টার ইতিবৃত্ত

হারানের মা'র কথা

নীরেন হারিয়ে গেছে। সবাই যুদ্ধকলীন তৎপরতায় নীরেনকে খুঁজতে লেগেছে কিন্তু ওই পর্যন্তই। হঠাৎকরে ছেলেটা যেন উবে গেল। আজ সকালেও ঘুম থেকে ওঠার পর থেকেই ওর regular routine শুরু করে দিয়েছিল—সারা বাড়ি ছুটোছুটি করা, দুধ না খাওয়া, দেওয়াল নোংরা করা... তারপর সেই যে পাড়ার বন্ধুদের সাথে লুকোচুরি খেলতে বেরোল, আর এল না। এখন রাত আটটা। দশ ঘন্টা হল বাড়ির বাইরে, কোথায় যে গেছে, কি করছে, kidnap হয়ে গেল কী? কে জানে। যাকগে, আমার ভাত করতে হবে, করি গে, খাওয়া-নাওয়া তো আটকে থাকবেনা এর জন্য...

মিতিনের কথা

ভাইটা আজ সকালে বলছিল, “দিদি একটা Cadbury দিবি?” আমি অসীমের জন্য gift wrap করছিলাম। বাঁদরটা ঠিক দেখতে পেয়েছে। দিয়েছি কথা শুনিয়ে। মুখ চুন করে চলে গেল। এখন মনে হচ্ছে কেন দিলাম না। অসীম তো ultimately আমাকেই chocolate গুলো খাওয়াবে। একটা ভাইটাকে দিলে কী ক্ষতি হত? ভগবান জানেন ও আর কোনোদিন chocolate খেতে পারবে কীনা...

অশোক বাবুর কথা

প্রথমে তো আমি বিশ্বাসই করতে পারিনি কথাটা। পাশের বাড়ির বিল্টু যখন বলল থোকাকে পাওয়া যাচ্ছেনা, ভাবলাম বোধহয় লুকোচুরী খেলতে গিয়ে লুকিয়েছে, পাওয়া যাচ্ছেনা। হারিয়ে গেছে! ওই ছোট্ট বাচ্চাটাকে kidnap করে কার কী উপকার হবে? আবার কার ফোন এল?

...“হ্যালো, হ্যাঁ বলছি।”

...“হ্যাঁ, রোজই তো খেলতে যায়, আজ হঠাৎহারিয়ে যাবে কে জানত?”

...“অচ্ছা বেয়াই মশাই, পুলিশ বলছে যে আজকাল নাকি বাচ্চাদের organ supply racket kidnap করছে, আপনি তো লালবাজারে কাজকরেন, আপনি জানেন কিছু এই racket এর কথা?”...

নীলিমা দেবী'র কথা

আমার দুধের শিশুটা কার পাকা ধানে মই দিয়েছিল। হে ঠাকুর, তোমার এত অবিচার, আমি রোজ সকাল-সন্ধ্যা তোমায় বাতাসা, নকুলদানা খাওয়াচ্ছি, আর তুমি আমার দিকেই মুখ তুলে চাওনা। কী দোষ করেছিল আমার আবোধটি? কেন, কেন তুমি এত নির্দয়? যতক্ষণ না ওকে পাওয়া যায় আমি জলগ্রহণ করব না, কোথাও নড়ব না, তোমার সামনেই বসে থাকব...

নীরেনের কথা

সেই দুপুর থেকে এখানে লুকিয়ে আছি, কেল্টুটা আমায় খুঁজেই
পেল না। হিহিঃ, পাবেও না। কেউ ভাবতেও পারবে না যে
আমি এখানে। বেশ হয়েছে। আমি এখানেই থাকব। খুঁজুক
আমায়। হিহিঃ...

Agniro Sipogi

THE PEOPLE WHO KEPT MY NAME TOMMY

It is parents who give us our names, and it is friends who call us up by different names to tease us. I was also teased by my friends as Tommy, which is also the name of a species, i.e., Chihuahua, as proposed by Mr. Debater. Chihuahua is a species of Tommy, which is so small, that it can be taken in pocket. Whether it be get-together party, classroom talk, or a practical class, Tommy was always teased. Sometimes Tommy argues, but sometimes, she keeps quiet, because in front of such big mouths, she has no space. But despite all these, she really cares and loves her masters/friends. So, let me introduce the people, who kept my name Tommy.

NEELANJAN: The "Pichaak!" (The person with a buttering nature, and whom I want to tease, but unable to do so)

SUBHAM: nicknamed Bham (bearing a sweet nature)

AGNIVO: the Chauvinist (of...)

SUGATO: Mr. Chipku (always glued to girls...)

SAYAN: Mr. Attitude (shows off too much)

SAKSHI: Miss. Debater (always tries to dominate on each and everything)

PRIYANKA: Miss Moody (talks as her mood dictates)

KRISHNENDU: mostly invisible (comes to the department as and when required)

UTTAM: Mr. Chhupa Rustom (beware of him... don't go

by his looks)

SUMITASH: Mr. Vatika (and also the father of Suyeporna Jana. Mr. Vatika because he won the contract for having smooth and silky hairs. None except me know. He must remember the incident and I envy him for it)

RITUPARNA: Mrs. Jana (the perfect bride for our perfect bridegroom, Sumitash Jana)

SUBHASREE: Miss. Paperweight (once placed, cannot be removed)

DEBOLEENA: nicknamed Linzie (one of my closest friends)

So, these are the people who have turned my life up and down and changed my overall personality from being shy and silent to being cheerful and jovial. They helped me to adjust in this new place, Kolkata, by making me feel their presence in every step of my college life. I love them all.

SPEAKING OUT TO THE STARS...

[Hey everyone! I had written the following poem to preserve the memories of my odd childhood habit of sneaking out into the verandah in the middle of the night to stare at the wonders of the night sky. I was about seven years old then and would spend hours counting the stars and would finally tiptoe back into bed at dawn without anybody noticing. :). Well, moving into a city ended my fascination—thanks to the heavy pollution, here the night sky is rendered dull, without stars... As our college days have come to pass, we will probably be scattered in the years to come... but "Let not the dust settle upon the diffused light... let the stars of our friendship twinkle bright!"]

Have you ever raised you eye...
 To observe the glittering night sky—
 Diamonds embedded in a world unknown
 A sublime sight experienced alone...

The dark trenches beckon me near,
 An instinctive voice alleviates my fear...
 I gaze at the hidden depths and wonder,
 What is beyond, what is younder??!

How peacefully calm the night is!
Mystery entombed in timeless folk stories—
Entice me closer to the enigmatic immensity,
Enthralling is the creator in his artistry.

Thousands of light years away; so far...
Sparkle the night lights, oh star!
A little girl looks and wistfully dreams...
Can I float closer to the jewels that gleam?

Amidst the adornments, the princess glows
Her radiance lands gently, and follows—
A trail leading into earth's sleeping homes,
And fills each drowsy mind with tender illusions

The moon's journey ends, the shimmer on earth is lost
To the night sky, the dawn's breaking white streaks do accost...
The diamonds start paling; earth's slumber is startled—
The day's arrival signals another night coming to an end...

The cycle repeats itself; years roll on
The little girl has long since grown—
Her mature eyes feel no awe for the black night sky...
The magic of innocence had ebbed out like morning starlight.

MAGICAL NUMBERS.COM

Math is quite a subject of curiosity. There is no limit to it. Our achievements are great in this subject in our aspect but they are just a little drop in the vast ocean of Math.

Here are some Maths-Magic for you

Take any 3 digit number and write it twice to make it 6 digit... having done this, divide the number first by 7... then by 11... and again by 13... you will get the same 3 digit no you have written very first.

E.g. Say we take 100... $100100/7 = 14300/11 = 1300/13 = 100$

Multiply Up To 20×20 in Your Head

In just FIVE minutes you should learn to quickly multiply up to 20×20 in your head. With this trick, you will be able to multiply any two numbers from 11 to 19 in your head quickly, without the use of a calculator.

I will assume that you know your multiplication table reasonably well up to 10×10 .

Try this:

- Take 15×13 for an example.

- Always place the larger number of the two on top in your mind.
- Then draw the shape of Africa mentally so it covers the 15 and the 3 from the 13 below. Those covered numbers are all you need.
- First add $15 + 3 = 18$.
- Add a zero behind it (multiply by 10) to get 180.
- Multiply the covered lower 3 by the single digit above it—the '5' ($3 \times 5 = 15$).
- Add $180 + 15 = 195$.

That is It! wasn't that easy? Practice it on paper first!

Quick Square

Did you know that there is a quick way of squaring a two digit number which ends in 5? Just multiply the first digit by that number plus one... stick a 25 after your product and there's your answer... simple?

E.g. Q: What is 35 squared?

A: $3 \times 4 = 12$

...now stick on the 25 ...the answer is 1225.

রবি-প্রণাম

“বৈরাগ্য সাধনে মুক্তি”! সে নয় তোমার,
 জীবন দেবতা সনে, তুমি করেছ বিহার।
 মরণ তোমার কাছে শ্যম সমান,
 সুন্দরে দেখেছ তুমি, ভরি দুনয়ান।
 নবীন যৌবন গলে দিয়া পুষ্পহার,
 জয়টীকা পরায়েছ ললাটে তাহার।
 শীত, গ্রীষ্ম, বসন্তের ঋতুরঙ্গ মাঝে
 মোর জীবন নিকুঞ্জে নিত্য যে রাগিনী বাজে,
 ঝংকৃত সেই সুর অগ্নিবীণে, হে, বীণাকার!
 জ্যোতির্ময় তুমি! এসেছ ভেঙে সর্বদ্বার।
 শোনাতে মাইভে: বাণী উদয়ের পথে,
 ত্যাগিয়াছ যশের লোভ, অবহেলা সাথে।

তোমার ‘বসন্ত-গান’ আমার ‘বসন্ত-দিনে’,
 জাগিয়াছে মোর প্রাণ নব আবাহনে।
 তাই তোমার সেদিন হতে ‘শতবর্ষ পরে’
 সঁপিলাম মোর অর্ঘ্য প্রেম উপাচারে।
 তোমার অনিন্দ ‘সৃষ্টি সুখের উল্লাস’
 আমারই একান্ত আপন জীবন-বিলাস।
 ক্ষুদ্র এ জীবনে সত্য, শুধু তোমারই নাম
 রবি, তোমায় জানাই আমার শতকোটি প্রণাম।

SIRJEE

The sun had set beyond the horizon when Anjan walked out of his cubicle. He had a file in one hand and a bag strapped over his shoulders. The files were of great importance and would have to be analyzed within that night. Work in an MNC was really a grilling affair.

Having come out into the busy thoroughfare of Broadway, he whistled for a cab. Like every other day, a cab screeched to a halt and reversed to the whistling corporate personnel. Anjan got into the cab and put down the bag and the files onto the seat beside him.

“Kahaan jana hai ji?” the driver asked.

Taken aback by this lack of the local tongue, Anjan looked up. The driver had a nice long beard, perfectly maintained, and large dark eyes. The face bore a few fresh scars, but that was well masked by the welcoming smile that the driver put up before him.

“Kentucky Avenue,” replied Anjan, still taking in the face that reminded him of his homeland. It had been five

years since his mother had passed away and he had left India, never to return again. He had no one to go back to. May be a few distant relations but they too maintained their distance pretty efficiently.

The driver returned to looking in front and said, "Ok Sirjee, let's go."

The guy was definitely not less than forty five years of age, if not quite more. Anjan surmised that he was surely part of those groups of Punjabi drivers who had left everything behind for a life in the US, but had finally ended up ferrying people.

"So Sirjee, where are you from. India?" asked the driver.

"Yes. Lucknow."

"Yes yes, I've heard of Lucknow. Never been there though. Very old city. Is there really a Bhulbhulaiya there inside the Imambara."

"Yes."

"So for how many days have you come, Sirjee? If you want I can show you around you know. Not much to see though, here. Only people rushing in and out of offices."

The offer almost made Anjan laugh, but he kept up the impassive expression. "I am here for five years now."

"Oooooo... sorry... sorry Sirjee. I hardly get to meet an Indian here. So I thought you are a tourist. Please don't mind, Sirjee."

Anjan laughed and said, "No no. Not at all. Infact I like the way you initiate conversation. Very spontaneous and interesting."

"Ho ho ho... almost everybody I meet tell me that. But, what is it that you do here Sirjee?"

"Well, for starters I work in an MNC that deals in petrochemicals in the US. Apart from that I also run a small Indian food joint near my house. My wife cooks really well you see, so I put this talent of hers to advantage."

"My wife used to cook really well too. That was, before I came here. She was killed during the last Indo-Pak war. My village was bombed to the ground as it stood very close to the LOC. I have never returned there since."

"I understand. I have always mentioned that this neighbour of India long deserved a proper lesson. Sending terrorists into our nation and then singing the mantra of peace. That is all Pakistan has ever done."

The driver remained quiet, probably remembering the time and people the battle had taken away from him. After a short pause, Anjan resumed the conversation.

"Since when have you been a cabby?"

"After the war I was helped by a friend who managed to get me here, and also got me the job. It has been 25 years since then. I don't mind this job though. It pays for my rent and I also get to meet so many people. Don't dream for anything more. In fact, don't dream at all anymore. Sirjee, would you like to see a picture of my family?"

Abashed at this statement, Anjan answered, "Well....yes, if you would like to show it to me?"

"Sure sure, here take a look. Now isn't that a nice photo?"

The picture was really old. It was of a large courtyard, surrounded by several rooms. In the middle stood four figures, two adults and two children. Anjan could easily make out the face of his acquaintance, a tall sturdy man with a beaming countenance that had happiness etched over every inch of it. Next to him stood his wife, a very calm soothing face that spoke of the serene atmosphere. And finally, there were the two kids, both boys, aged between 14 and 8 years, both of them. Anjan could hardly remember any other family photo that exuded so much warmth.

"So Sirjee, do you see what I have lost?" the driver said with a smile, one filled with sarcasm.

"Yes. It must have been beautiful to be with them."

"Now you realize Sirjee what war is all about. It gives much, but takes away even more. Nobody is spared Sirjee, nobody."

Anjan could see a tear roll down his cheek. He moved forward to console this man whose life was now meaningless to its possessor, when suddenly the driver applied the brakes such that the car screeched forward. Then, a loud agonizing crash, and Anjan was left in complete darkness.

Almost 24 hours had passed, when Anjan regained consciousness. It was raining outside. He looked around and deduced that he was in a hospital. Suddenly a doctor walked into the room.

"So, you are awake I see. Great thing the driver got you here in time. Or it would have been a tougher job for us."

Anjan could see that the doctor was not of American origin.

“Ummm....where am I?”

“Ohhh...I forgot to tell you. This is the Cherry Place Hospital and I am Dr. Gul. Your cab met with an accident. You were unconscious but the driver didn’t get hurt too much. Lucky for him. He picked you up from there and got you here with all your belongings. Nice man I must say.

“Was he ok?”

“Ahhh he was fine. I paid him the fare from your wallet. I’m sure he’ll need it.”

Anjan felt relieved that everything had gone well. He just wished he could wish the driver goodbye. The man had been such lovely company and so helpful too.

He got out of bed and went into Dr. Gul’s office. His files and bag lay on the table. As he was about to leave he noticed the picture of the driver’s family between two other papers. Taking it out he thought that the poor man would surely miss it. He was about to put it back when suddenly he noticed something written on the

backside of the picture. He could hardly read it as it was neither in English nor in Hindi.

“Dr. Gul, could you just tell me what this says?”

He looked at the picture, then the writing and then spoke, “Surely, I can read this. It says in Urdu, ‘The family of Naseer Jamal, Alamgarh, Pakistan.’”

A loud clap of thunder brought Anjan back to reality.



Drishanka Kojirwal

SOLITARY REAPER

VAIRAV-VAISHNAVI KATHA

Fake! ...The world is Fake. And everything we see around us is a whim... fantasma. We are born to die one day and die to be born again... may be or may be not... and within this period of life and death we have to prove... prove that everything is just not a dream but reality or has to be turned into reality... and how we wish that reality could just be a bad dream...

Hold on...! Let me cut short. I am not a philosopher and neither are you reading this crap to feel holy or something... jus' trying to pen down the thoughts of Vairav...

Vairav, a young lad of 23, who has somehow not been able to clear his MBA entrance this year too... oh yes... he was sitting in Maniktala bus stop waiting for a bus to Alipur. He had to appear for an interview over there. Already two buses have passed and he was still thinking, 'The world is Fake... and reality could just be a bad dream... etc... etc... etc...'

'Oh...shit! ...damn ...this time I will be careful' Vairav remarked on getting the last glimpse of the second bus, that he has missed just then. He turned around to sit and...!!! 'Oh sorry... sorry... I am so sorry... I am extremely sorry', a girl... [God knows how old, may be in her early 20s... who cares...! girls are always beautiful!] collided with Vairav (more properly her glass of Pepsi did) ...and most of the drink spilt over his white shirt... his 'interview' shirt... Vairav looked at her... "Reality... Dream... Fantasma...!"

'Sorry...? What?' the girl scorned...

'Nothing...' Vairav lowered his head and tried to pay more attention to the Pepsi stains... 'I had to go for an interview... and...' said Vairav, now feeling really worried about his shirt.

'May I help you...? I mean we can get a shirt, a new white one...? See there are shops nearby and...' the girl tried to explain.

'No thanks... I will manage... and moreover I am late', Vairav answered waiving his hand in denial... 'Its ok...

and it was an accident, you didn't do it deliberately... right', soothed Vairav [He needed the soothing more than her!]

'No... I'm feeling extremely guilty... Look I have a car... u don't need to worry... I will get you there... Where do you have to go?' ...the girl said, desperate to help him.

The drama went on for next 5mins until when a bus arrived and Vairav jumped into it to avoid anymore discussions. 'Uffffff... Thank God... you sent the bus', he said it aloud not realizing people staring at him... his shirt.

I don't want to explain in details what happened at the interview... I hope you guys very well can imagine.

'Do you seriously want the job?' said the interviewer, a 50-year old with no hair and a designer beard [You know those coloured ones! Habib's special!]

'Yes sir... I am very much interested to do the job...' said Vairav, his eyes gleaming.

'Your shirt doesn't say so... Mr.' scorned the man.

'Sorry sir... I clashed with a Pepsi glass... I mean someone with a Pepsi glass... uhh... uh... and so I... I got these stains... I mean the Pepsi fell and...' stammered Vairav.

'That's it... I understand! Accident... I see?' a wicked look in his face.

'Yes sir... Sir would you like to see my resume?' said Vairav, eagerly handing over the file.

'No... It's ok. I want to see the inner conscience... honesty... you get it?' said the man still preserving his wicked look.

'You may go now' and thus Vairav's interview was over.

He came down the stairs, now counting them [as he couldn't answer when he was asked at the interview] and went to the bus stop morosely.

Now he had enormous time to dream about Fake and Reality but he simply didn't have the mood.

Strolling absent-mindedly, he started walking towards Kalighat. A white Indica screeched before him to halt and the Pepsi lady stepped out. 'Hello! Mr....? Anyways... how was your interview?' she asked.

'Huh... what?' said a surprised Vairav. [...Dream...Reality...] 'Shit again those thoughts... why God... why do I always think wrong things at the right time..?' Murmured Vairav.

'What?' she asked. 'Nothing... you? here?' asked Vairav.

'Oh... I do French classes here' she smiled. 'Would you like a lift home? I dare not ask lest you jump into another bus...' and then started laughing. 'Oh! These girls...! They laugh at everything' thought Vairav.

'Sure, why not!' and got into the car. 'Anyways, I am Vaishnavi... Vaishnavi Jhunjhunwala. And you?'

'What?' said Vairav, controlling his laughter, 'I mean... good... nice name! I am Vairav Ganguly. I am a Bengali. Please drop me at Sealdah. I have something to buy...' lied Vairav, to avoid getting caught by someone local. His advocate father would kill him.

THREE MONTHS LATER

'We can't marry... We simply can't... you are a Bengali and younger than me, you see?' said Vaishnavi almost in the verge of tears. 'So what? ...we will run away!' answered Vairav as if he had immediately invented time machine. 'Shut up! ...I can't do that!' she said wiping her tears.

'Why? ...I work, you work... so?'

'No way... If we run away we have to leave our jobs, stupid!' [As if she had license to slang him anywhere she liked]

Vairav looked around the cafeteria if someone had heard it. 'Listen... we have no other way... but...' he tried to explain her in a lower voice, 'You listen to me... I will

talk to Dad... If he doesn't listen, we will do the same... ok' and walked out.

Things turned out to be different. Of course, the families were not ready but Vaishnavi's mother made flight arrangements to... guess... where?

Sri Lanka. Of all Sri Lanka... They were to leave in a week. Everything was hush hush. They had tickets booked for a connecting flight from Mumbai. Both had made excuses of official trips and headed off. It was a night flight and they would reach at 2:30 am in Mumbai. Next flight was at six in the morning. This was scheduled for Thursday, the 28th January 2005. Perhaps, in the history of the Bengalis this would be the first time a guy would elope with a girl not vice versa.

The Telegraph, 29 January 2005.

Plane crashes into ashes.

Early morning a plane (EK-625) towards Sri Lanka crashed at the Palk Strait after being hit by a personal

jet. It is believed that none of the passengers were alive.
The Navy...

Vaishnavi's mom had fainted. Only she knew the truth.

The doctors looked and said, 'Sorry Mr. Jhujhunwala. Your wife has gone into coma.' Think of the man who has lost his daughter in a plane crash and his wife is in coma out of grief.

"The World is Fake and how we wish that reality could just be a bad dream...!"

TWO YEARS LATER

Ding Dong.

'Coming. Who's there...? These maids can never be found on time. I have to do everything.' murmured Vaishnavi's dad. He opened the door and... shocked... like 2 years ago, when he heard of the plane crash in which his daughter was killed.

'Dad... are you ok? Look I am back. Where's maa?' asked Vaishnavi. Vairav entered a little later.

'Maa... maa... where are you?' Vaishnavi entered the house looking for her mother. She entered the bedroom to see her mother lying in bed. She rushed to her, 'Maa... maa... what happened?' Within the next ten minutes, her mother was speaking after two long years. There were tears in their eyes. After the doctor had left, it was Vaishnavi's turn to explain.

Everything was going easy till Vairav was stuck in the gents toilet at Mumbai airport. This was his first time in flight. And so was the first time he was eloping. So he did his part. He got confused so badly that he locked the door from inside and struggled hard to open it. Leaving his mobile with his would-be wife, he made a last minute decision to go to the toilet.

'Sweetheart, we will be late. There is a toilet in the plane!' requested Vaishnavi.

'No way... It will be too late then. I am very nervous.' and Vairav rushed towards the bathroom leaving Vaishnavi at the boarding queue.

By the time Vairav was let out by the airport authorities the plane had left. It was 6:45 am and Vairav sat lowering his head with Vaisnavi right in front of him... standing!

'I am sorry'.

'Don't say that... No... Please. It's my fault. I should have accompanied u to the bathroom, isn't it?' said an extremely irritated Vaishnavi.

'What next...? Go home?' asked Vairav meekly. 'Are you nuts? We have to catch a ship. I have talked to the port office. We are waiting for our luggage.'

A man came running and passed crossed them shouting, 'EK-625 has crashed...!'

They left for Sri Lanka that day without luggage and neither did they inform the airport authorities. Since

they had already issued their boarding passes it was in the records that they were dead.

And now they are here... today, supposing that their families have cooled down.

Vaishnavi's mom spoke again, 'I would have died a sinner if you people were not alive. Thank God. One's wish has a lot of power. That's why dreams do come true. For me you both are born again. Reality is not just really a bad dream!!'

At this, Vairav looked at her mother-in-law and smiled.

THEN AND NOW

THEN

I still remember the day vividly... the 13th of July 2005. As soon as I walked through the gates of Presidency College as a Presidencian, my heart was suddenly filled with a strange happiness. I did not know what it was for, but somehow it made me feel that "I am the King of the World" ...the luckiest person ever. I looked at everything that came to my eyes with eager anxiousness as I walked into the Derozio Hall for the first time. It was here that I felt the greatness of the college—Presidency College. As I was venturing out of the Derozio hall after the counseling, my journey down the Presidency lanes had already began... a journey in which got everything that I have at present. Everything that I have achieved in life has been in Presidency College. The 13th of July 2005 is the day I hold was the most precious day of my life.

NOW

As I leave Presidency College after three years of complete bliss, I still feel the same happiness every time I come to the college... I still do not know why. This college has given me a lot and on the top of that list is my second family... my departmental friends, our very own "*Chotto Songsar*", who have become a part of me now. I really doubt if any other batch in any other

department has ever bonded so well, as we have in the past three years. People say that you do not make friends in college, but I am very happy to have proved them wrong... the only true friends I have made, have been in college. Sometimes I feel really lucky that I have been blessed with such friends, who have become more than friends for me. Of course, I was involved in other activities in college-politics, sports, and was endowed with various responsibilities that had kept me occupied, but truly, my final realization was that my second family is the best gift that Presidency College has given me. I really lament those times when I could not be there with them, citing various priorities, but it was at the end of the last year that I realized that my priority should always have been my department-my friends, because at the end of it all, they were the only ones who really thought about me. As I pass out of Presidency College, I leave a part of my heart behind, because of which I will keep coming back to this college.

As I sign off, I can guess why I feel that strange happiness inside me... THEN, it was out of sheer excitement of a new life and NOW, because Presidency reminds me of the times I have been with my *chhotto songsar*... the times that I will really miss, the times that brought out the person in me. I really don't have words to express my gratitude towards my second family for being there... whenever I needed them. Cheers to our

friendship, cheers to our success, which is sure to come to each of us. Though we have to continue with our individual respective paths, our *chhotto songsar* will continue to thrive... I am sure of that.

THEY DON'T COME WITH TITLES

"A-RACK-NO-PHOBIA...Arachnophobia!!", blurts out Linz. And then, it's their turn to whisper a name.

"No!" I cry out... "Not Janu and his famous irritating 10-word names!" ...as I have just seen a naughty look passing Janu's eyes.

And then, the bottle takes a spin, and its mouth rests before Ri2.

"Truth. But don't ask me stupid questions, which do not have answers."

"OK, Ri2... tell something about Janu as a person."

Janu: "abaaaaaaaaar!! ufffffff!"

Ri2: "Basically he's a spoilsport! But otherwise, he's very helpful, and a family man. He will get many good girls in life."

Aagan: "And if he doesn't *ami to achi!*"

Suddenly, there's a big grunt followed by a loud snore. Paperweight screams out in her sleep, "*Kon s*** eto*

jore naak dakche, boss?"

Linz starts explaining, "well, u see, snoring is actually..." only to be interrupted by Aagan, with his MP3 player dangling from his ears, "Nobody wanted explanations, Linz".

And then, Neelu takes out a patties and walks towards AKS sir's bunk, "Sir, *patties khaben?*"

Aks Sir: "In this hour of night? No No... but what are you doing, all awake?" We reply, Sir, "*Farakka dekhbo*".

Suddenly we see PM Sir's drowsy face, "Uttam, Uttam, *soote jabe na? ami to dekhlam neech theke, je tomra ele, upore dekhle abar chole gele.*"

And then, there's a knock on the door. We open. A Nepalese *kancha* enters with a plate of poached egg.

I ask, "Anybody wants a share?"

Ri2 says, "Yes". I feed her. She whimpers out, "We surely have a mitochondrial affection between us, *ufff amar hypoxia.*"

I pick up the intercom to order one more for her.

"E Bhai, what are u doing in a girls' room. Don't you know there's a bird-flu epidemic? ekhon poch khete hobena...", says a voice over the phone. I stammer, "I mean... who are you?" The voice announces, "I am CM sir". I keep down the phone.

Linz says, *"Uff, esob khele ami mota hoe jabo. Where's my electric pad? O my God, it's defunct. Now? It's so cold."*

Subirda enters the room, *"dao dao Debaleena, ami sooob thik kore debo... tomar konooo osubidhe hole amay personally bolbe."*

Ri2 observes, *"R ei thanday ekhankar chhele hoyeo Agni 8 layers jamakapor pore PM sir keo har manalo!" to which Agni supports, "Ha, Bathroom jetegeleto amar jama-pant khultei 15 minutes lage"*.

And then, Krish comes out from the bathroom, wearing only a towel on his lower part.

Ri2 says, *"Ish, ish, ja ja, bero, ami kintu ghor theke berie jabo... jama na porle... ami kintu..."*

Krish: *"bero na..."* to which Ri2 says, *"Na, the Hematology kit that's lost was placed under my*

responsibility... so I've come to search for it."

Suddenly Neelu enters the room through the bathroom window, "What's in that Food Bazaar packet? Open it I say... Show it to me."

Linz protests, "Those are my..."

Neelu, slightly embarrassed, quickly suggests, "I think I should personally assess the road to this place, to make sure we haven't dropped it on the way. It's feasible..."

Aagan informs, "Go, and u'll see those faithful doggies leading you throughout... they are so cuuuute."

Sugs: "Aeee... *doggie dekheo Aaganer Eiffel Tower hoy, naki?*"

Chadan: "A... CHUP DE!"

Sugs: "*Kancha kutuaaaaaaa*".

Linz assured, "if you don't find it on the road, I'll go to Subirda's room in case the packet has been misplaced there. I can offer this sacrifice for my friends."

And then, there's the lovely view of the Kanchenjunga Sunrise through the window.

"Ei Aagan, wake up! There's the sunrise!!" Aagan sleep-talks, "uuuuh, Nooo... I can see the sunrise from the roof of my Jalpaiguri house, why should I see it here?"

"dekho dekho, chhobita kemon hoeche?" PM Sir shows his camera. On the other side, Sayyan shoots the sunrise view. I make my expert comments. Sayyan gets pissed off.

"E chhora, okhane oto niche ki korcho, pore jabe to!" ...CM Sir.

"Sir, uni to PM Sir, chhobi tulchen", Sayyan asserts.

Neelu butts in, "Basically, there's so much cloud and fog, that the sunrise is not that clear. But this place is awesome Sir. You have some choice. I personally want to come here again with my family. Perhaps I'll have to contact Subirda again!" Amul, anyone?

I sympathize, "God save Pupul".

"TORA KEU AMAY DAKLINA, TORA AMAR SATHE EROM KORLI, AMI SUNRISE DEKHTA PARLAMNA!!", Aagan

screams on waking up.

And suddenly, twigs and small branches start cracking beneath our feet. The leaves force their way through our legs. There's an eerie silence.

"Haatider gestation period kotodiner hoy re?" Aagan plays a spoilsport to the silent forest ambience.

"Look there, a BCL Couple", Ri2 points out excitedly at the two rhinoceroses that have just appeared out of the thick jungle. "Just like you and me", Aagan.

"ami amar bhaike bolechi or janno 1ta bachcha gonder nie jabo" ...Madhu informs.

"uff, kotodin Saima-te jaina", complains Aagan, "but this Chicken Sweet and Sour is brilliant!"

"It's a yummy for my tummy."

"aeee... ami kokhon fried rice chailam, amay keu dilona...", speaks a voice, supposedly churned out of UP Sir's larynx.

"sobi Khajuraho" ...nasty Sugs.

Dicky joins in... *"aaplog student ho? par aap to uncle lagte ho."* *"Hum bhi student hain"*, jokes AKS. Dicky remarks, *"Aap to dadu lagte ho."*

And then, everyone starts dancing around the bonfire. Life's just... *babuuuuuuuu...* superb now... *wake upppp...* its grand... *studies...* friends together... *khali ghora r ghumunoo...* Oh God, let it last forever!

"khali ghora r ghumuno, porasona nei? dui mash pore Joint Entrance, abar pabena."

"sokal 8ta baje, ekhono ghumuchche. Tomar dara kichchu hobena."

"Jointer Physicser boi gulo complete koro... Young man hoe eto ghumao!"

I jerked up. No Jana on the bed beside me. Hence not Jaldapara. Me the only one in my blanket. Hence, not Lataguri. No four beds joined. Hence, not Lolaygaon. No upper floors. Hence not Rishyap. No *jhik jhiks*. Hence not a train.

I looked at the date on the bedside calendar. 20 January

2008.

Dream? Well, maybe. If dreams be like this, then who wants reality?

Or was the reality a dream for those eight days?

AN UNTITLED POEM

রাত শেষে ভোর এসে
 ছুয়েদিল আমায় ভালোবেসে।
 রোদদূর যেন প্রেমিকের বেসে
 বসল আমার পাশে এসে।
 আমি শ্রান্ত দিক্‌ দ্রান্ত,
 খুঁজে খুঁজে পথ প্রান্ত
 জানিনা কখন পৌঁছে গেলাম
 সুতীর ঘুমের ঐ দেশে।
 চলাই জীবন তাই চলি
 মনে মনে তবু বলি
 চলতে গিয়ে পেরোতে হলো
 কতনা চোরাবালি।
 বুকে আশা বাঁধে বাসা
 খুঁজে মরে ভালোবাসা;
 সকালে রোদের সে ভালোবাসার
 ঠিকানা পেলাম অবশেষে।
 রাত শেষে ভোর এসে
 ছুয়েদিল আমায় ভালোবেসে।

Subhasree Ray



QUEER-DATE

I agitatedly looked out of the large glass window. People passed by—some in hurry, some in leisurely pace. Few curious onlookers peered inside eager to catch a glimpse of the smartly dressed girls sitting at the tables. Couples passed by the window—some silently, some talking and many laughing—all eliciting looks of envy from the other pedestrians. I bubbled with joy and anticipation—well after today I could also become like one of those couple—I could be having a girl to go around with.

It so happened that for the past three months I had been dating a girl called Paromita on Orkut, an internet friendship site. Both of us loved music—that too classical music. While I love playing sared, she loved playing violin. She also said that she was an expert in bharatnatyam. Both of us were working for software firms based in Calcutta and were kind of bored with our lives. And best of all—both of us were 27 and still single!

We were excited when we found that we shared so much in common. Finally, Paromita proposed what I had

been wanting to say for a long time—"lets meet". It was quickly decided that the rendezvous should be at "Haldiram's" on Monday at 10 o'clock sharp. I had coaxed my boss to give me a leave on that day by working extra time the previous week. "Matters of the heart", I had told him. Being young and having got married a few weeks after a whirlwind romance, my boss had consented and had wished me luck. However, he had been very skeptical when he came to know that all our dating had taken place over the Net.

Paromita had insisted that both of us wear red T-shirts. When I had asked "why red?", she had mysteriously replied, "Red is the colour of love!" Since, we had not met before, she had described herself as—"good looking surely not an ethereal beauty, hazel coloured eye, red hair, not too tall and having a good figure". I had described myself as—"simple looking—no Brad Pitt, average height and built and dark eyes". I had asked for her cell phone number, but she said that that she was not willing to share her number until we had met. So I was there waiting at Haldiram's since 9 o'clock. I had already ordered some snacks, had finished it, and paid for it—I waited.

On the other table sat a muscular hunk, probably also waiting for someone. As I waited the minutes seemed hours and time seemed to come to a standstill. At around 10, a pretty girl wearing a red top walked into the shop. My heart skipped a few beats. She proceeded toward my table at the corner of the shop. I half stood up and extended my hand in order to greet her...

Suddenly the hunk sitting at the other table called out “Neha!” and the girl almost ran off to his table. Dart! I felt like a caustic idiot and sat down. I couldn’t help but notice the love in the eyes of the two young people. Somehow I felt like using four-lettered expletives at everyone around.

I waited and waited. Feeling bored at around half past ten I called up one of my friends—Rahul. Rahul was a complete netizen and always greeted all his friends with a customary expletive. I narrated my plight to him and said that I had got tired waiting.

Rahul exclaimed, “What, you have fallen into this simple trap. I myself have tricked many a people like this—you, silly fool you fell for this!”

I replied, "NO, Rahul, I know in my heart that Paromita is true.

"Hah, you dumb ass. It must be some old man playing a dirty trick on a young heart."

"No, I'm sure this is not a joke."

"I bet you that no girl will walk up to you. After sometime you'll see that a man walking up to you and he'll say that he had been playing his trick on you. He'll say that he is very sorry, but he was bored and so put up the play. He'll say if you would want to be his friend."

"Rahul, stop your nonsense."

"Heh, look pal, I've been netting since ages and I know much about such stuff. This is actually how gays hook young men. Do you think all the people around you are innocent like you?"

"Rahul, you are scaring me."

"I bet you that a man 'if at all' will walk up to you and I bet free grand that the man will be a gay. Well wait and watch. Give me a call in the evening, how your 'date' was. Bye."

I was waited again, brooding about what Rahul had said. A few minutes later a middle aged man with a receding hairline and a paunch walked into the shop. He was wearing a red T-shirt. He scanned the shop and then seemed to spot me. He walked up to me and asked me, "Are you Rajesh Chatterjee?"

Startled, I replied, "Yes" (My head started to spin).

He asked me, "Are you waiting for Paromita?"

Terrified, I answered, "Y-Yes. Why?"

He answered with a smile, "Pleased to meet you. I am Raju Debnath." He extended his hand.

In a flash I was up and fled as fast as my legs could carry me. The man had no chance in catching up with me...

The man in red T-shirt walked up to a car waiting beside the pavement. He peered inside the window of the car and said, "Madam, there was a man wearing red shirt waiting and said that he was waiting for you but he rushed out before I could tell him that you had sent me just to check if it was a hoax."

The smart looking girl sitting inside, seemed startled. She was dressed in a red top and low waist jeans. She lifted her hazel eye and replied, "pity, god knows what got into him. I was really interested in meeting him. He too seemed interested..."

বিদায় বেলায়

তোমাদেরই স্মৃতিগুলি ডাক দিয়ে যায়
 কখনো হাসায় মোরে কখনো কাঁদায়;
 জানি আমি অনেকেই যাবে মোরে ভুলে
 মিলাব স্মৃতির থেকে বিস্মৃতির তলে।
 সময় হয়েছে আজ যেতে হবে সরে
 অজানার হাতছানি টেনে নেবে দূরে;
 নিরবে সেদিন মোরে যেতে দিও চলে
 সমুখে দাঁড়ালে এসে বিদায়ের কালে।

কত সুখ, কত দুঃখ, কত রসিকতা
 কত প্রেম, কত ব্যথা, কত নিরবতা,
 আজ যেন মনেহয় দু'দিনের কথা।
 যদি হারাই আমি বা লুকাই কখনো
 আর না মিলে উদ্দেশ, মনে মনে জেনো,
 প্রাণে মোর হয়ে রবে চিরতরে গাঁথা।

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